

Obama Loses White House Faith-Based Office Leader

Longtime White House aide Joshua DuBois, who heads the White House office focused on the intersection of religion and public policy, will step down on Friday, President Obama announced Thursday.

Obama, speaking at the **National Prayer Breakfast**, asked DuBois to lead his White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships in 2009 when the Pentecostal reverend was 26, and hoped DuBois could sustain the ties he had helped forge between Obama and religious groups during the 2008 presidential campaign.

DuBois will teach at New York University starting later in the year, according to White House officials, and also plans to write a book based on the inspirational messages he sent to Obama daily.

"Every morning he sends me via email a daily meditation—a snippet of Scripture for me to reflect on," Obama told the more than 3,000 people gathered for the annual bipartisan prayer breakfast. "And it has meant the world to me."

DuBois tweeted in response: "Humbled beyond words. Grateful to God for a good president, and a good friend. Thankful for all of you. And excited about the future."

DuBois, 30, who grew up in Nashville, Tenn., and worked as an assistant pastor in Massachusetts and for Obama when he was a senator, also plans to start a new organization with Michael Wear—his former assistant at the White House—to help organizations and local governments partner with faith-based organizations, according to a White House source.

Wear also directed faith-based outreach for the president's

re-election campaign.

DuBois, despite his youth, earned the respect of many who work at the intersection of faith and politics, but he was criticized for not changing a policy that preceded him that allows religious groups that receive federal funds to hire and fire based on an employee's religion.

At the prayer breakfast sponsored by members of Congress who meet weekly for prayer when Congress is in session, Obama steered clear of political topics and spoke of his faith in both personal and general terms.

"Sometimes I search Scripture to determine how best to balance life as a president and as a husband and as a father. I often search for Scripture to figure out how I can be a better man as well as a better president," Obama said.

He continued: "And I believe that we are united in these struggles. But I also believe that we are united in the knowledge of a redeeming Savior, whose grace is sufficient for the multitude of our sins, and whose love is never failing."

The prayer breakfast is interfaith, but with a heavily evangelical Christian emphasis.

At this year's event, Obama shared the dais with first lady Michelle Obama, Vice President Joe Biden and keynoter Dr. Benjamin S. Carson, director of pediatric neurosurgery at the Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions.

Opera star Andrea Bocelli sang "Ave Maria" for the gathering and Gabrielle Douglas, the gold-medal-winning Olympic gymnast, offered the closing prayer.